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AUTHOR Hilliard, Asa G.
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ABSTRACT

This paper states that the real issue in multicultural education is to gain a clear sense of cultural dynamics as they affect education and to develop effective strategies for guaranteeing real equity in educational opportunity for all. The author discusses some essentials of multicultural education. First, the following nine essential considerations should be contained in multicultural education programs: (a) the teaching process is always a cross cultural encounter; (b) all teaching tools are culture bound; (c) the classroom is a potent matrix; and (d) the teacher must understand that all minds are equally complex. Second, teachers must develop the following skills to teach students from other cultures: (a) the ability to communicate; (b) the ability to diagnose knowledge and capabilities; (c) the ability to evaluate the professional literature bearing upon multicultural education problems; (d) the ability to diagnose oneself; and (e) the ability to recognize cultural equivalencies. Third, three basic attitudes that should emerge as teachers work cross-culturally are described. Fourth, the clinical context for multicultural teacher education is described in seven essentials. The author concludes that there is hope for success in improving the ability of teachers to work with children from different cultures if training programs give the highest priority to this problem and if the successful cross-cultural experiences of teachers of all races and socio-economic background are used as a guide. (A 17-item bibliography is included.) (PD)

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RESTRUCTURING TEACHER EDUCATION

FOR

MULTICULTURAL IMPERATIVES

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Asa G. Hilliard

Ralph Ellison has explored and developed the concept of "invisible man." It seems a commonplace now although it was a hidden truth for many years. Minority subcultures within the United States were simply not seen or taken seriously. It was possible for many Americans during these years to maintain the myth of America as a complete melting pot. A few "mainstream" Americans talked about cultural differences as a part of America, but this was largely in the abstract.

Taking that abstraction along with the way experience was presented in the mass media, it certainly seemed as if America was a melting pot. Likewise, to look at the boards of directors of large corporations, the top leadership in politics and government, and the top leadership in the educational establishment was testimonial to a sterile and crippling sameness in American life. Many cultural sub-groups were simply left out.

Since the late 60's, there has been a crack in the facade. Self-conscious activism permeates many areas of American life among minorities. "Affirmative action" in hiring has resulted in more of a mosaic for America, albeit a limited one. The events of the past few years in America have made it easier and more likely that as educators we can and must deal with the fact of multiculturalism in our schools.

Many people seem to have had the view that schools were somehow isolated from the normal cultural milieu. In fact, schools more than anything else are

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reflections of processes that go on in the culture at large. After all, we are the same citizens who participate in other areas of American life. It is unlikely, as George Counts suggested many years ago that it will be schools that will "dare to build a new social order." Schools cannot operate independently of the culture as a whole and schools tend not to be the most potent segment of our society anyway. Whatever building we do must be on the process of doing our job better by preparing students who have the skills, attitudes and understandings to survive and to enhance their lives and to develop concern for the growth of tneir fellow man. I would settle for these modest objectives. It is very good that we now seem to be at a point of readiness to deal realistically with the fact that there are multicultural imperatives in education.

The symptom of problems stemming from our failure to deal with our varied pupil populations are everywhere apparent. Yet we cannot talk about multcultural education assuming that there is a common understanding when the term is used. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the basic issues at this time.

MULTICULTURALISM IN EDUCATION: WHAT IS THE REAL ISSUE?

America is made up of many sub-cultures. The benefits of citizenship are distributed unevenly among these groups. Symptoms of inequity are easy to spot. For the poor and many ethnic or racial minorities, we educators see; abnormally high drop out rates, extremely poor attendance at school, very limited participation in the curricular or co-curricular school program, disproportionately higher representation in "educationally handicapped" programs and disproportionately lower representation in "gifted" programs, and strange phenomena such as a decrease in intelligence quotient with age for Black children who were at the same level as White children on measures of infant intelligence taken during the first 15 months of life. The list goes on and it shows that some sub-groups in our country are still in real trouble. Why? Many educators and social researchers have sought the answer by attempting to study the culture in trouble to find out why it is "deficient"

or "ill." Millions of dollars of federal and private money has been spent to follow leads growing out of the deficit or pathological hypothesis. Explanations based upon deficit and pathology have claimed the mainstream of professional attention. Conversely, little or no professional attention has been paid to the study of means by which sub-cultures are victimized or the way in which victimization influences behavior. This distinction as to the origin of the problem is critical since the adoption of either explanation will lead educators to a quite different set of expectations for the affected students and a different set of professional responses to problems.

The real issue in multicultural education is how to gain a clear sense of cultural dynamics as they affect education and to develop effective strategies for guaranteeing real equity in educational opportunity for all. For some educators, multicultural education is simply a matter of infusing regular school content with material which deals with different customs, dress, food or other matters which fall under the label of cultural appreciation. This is a very limited perspective and will contribute little to the solution of the fundamental problem of inequity. The main reason is that it leaves out consideration of individual and institutional racism or other prejudice as part of the foundation for victimization. As painful as it may be to deal with racism and other prejudice, it is impossible to approach problems realistically and ignore these matters. To do so is to be like the man who was looking for a lost coin two blocks away from where it was lost because the light was better at the new spot. For him to continue in that way, the problem could never be solved. Similarly, educators must deal directly with the problem where it is.

Our task as professionals is not only to help others but to deal with ourselves as well. Self diagnosis and remediation is necessary in order to see ourselves accurately and to function properly as a part of the dynamics of the school. We cannot simply take a clinical or uninvolved look at the school context. We affect it and are affected by it as well as other aspects of our culture.

THE ESSENTIAL MULTICULTURAL CONTENT FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Given the fact that most teachers will ultimately function in some kind of culturally heterogenous environment and the fact that there is a problem in gaining equality of opportunity for some groups within our culture, what is the essential multicultural content for teacher education programs?

Essential Understandings

1. The Teaching Process is Always a Cross Cultural Encounter.

   Teachers are representatives of a particular configuration of subcultures. Age, socio-economic status, geographical background, education, belief systems, etc., are examples of these sources of a teacher's cultural configuration. It is out of this unique cultural configuration that the teacher notices variations among students, frames questions, develops expectations and plans action. Similarly, each student brings his unique configuration as a basis for perceiving and responding. Therefore, when a teacher and a student meet each other to deal with learning tasks, it is not simply a matter of academic content which must be handled. In fact, the very selection of content to be considered, the way in which that content is to be considered and the use to which the content is to be put are all influenced by what teacher and student bring to the context. Consequently, it becomes important that teachers experience enough to expect a cultural encounter so that they do not make errors in assessing classroom dynamics. Teachers must feel in their bones that each student in a given class is having a unique rather than standard experience, and that the teachers own experience is equally unique. To understand this is to see how meaningless a question such as the following can be when discussed in the abstract. "What should a teacher do when a student is disrespectful of the rights of others?" Which teacher? Which student? Which context?

2. The Personality, Values and Social Background of the Teacher are Critical Cultural Inputs.

The teacher is the primary professional "tool" in a classroom. As seen above, there is no "standard teacher." Teachers vary in the ways mentioned above but also in several other significant personal ways. Teachers do not have the same self-concept and motivation. Teachers are not alike in terms of courage and fear, comfort and threat, loneliness, guilt, personal growth or deficit, rich or bland life styles, or feelings of power or powerlessness. These and other dimensions of teacher personal configurations bear heavily upon the interchange which takes place between teachers and pupils and has positive or negative effects upon the growth of pupils independent of course organization, school physical facilities, textual materials, etc.

3. All Teaching Tools are Culture Bound.

The easy availability and slick format of most standardized teaching tools such as tests, textbooks, and courses of study tend to mask the fact that the orientation of teaching tools favor the mainstream of American culture. Economically and administratively this makes for a simple straightforward process of education. But these things ignore differences and send negative messages to the poor, racial and ethnic minorities. These groups readily sense that they are being ignored, they there are not being valued, and that by having the school as a major-cultural institution operate as if their culture does not exist, an oppressive environment is created. Teachers in training must understand how the tools are culture bound and the impact that this has upon students.

4. The Classroom is not a Be[illegible]n Context but a Potent Matrix.

Too little attention has been paid to the real work of the classroom.

Philip Cusick (1973) spent several months as a "participant-observer" in a high school subgroup. What emerges from his report is a picture in clear relief of the culture of the school and classroom. Even to experienced teachers, he presents new information on "invisible activities" of students in a high school. Even though many teachers have little awareness of much that goes on among students, students themselves often are acutely aware of what is happening to them. Daily in every classroom the following things happen almost constantly in direct and indirect ways. Teachers and students are involved in judgments, sanctions, rewards, labeling, control of time, control of space, paying attention to things, blaming, intimidation (using knowledge, power or status), employing paternalism, valuing, loving, selection of content for study, selection of means of academic presentation, including others in activities, exclusing or isolating others, and so on ad infinitum. It is precisely through these activities that conscious or unconscious bias or inequity can intrude into the transactions among teachers and students. There is literally no escape for the student who is victimized by the unequal or non culture-specific application of these processes. Similarly, this tends to explain the "greased slide" for students who happen to be in the proper rut. A teacher training program must cause these processes to be fully illiminated.

5. Teachers Must Understand How the Student Can be a Victim.

It is important that teachers understand and recognize when a student is responding as a victim of an oppressive condition, as opposed to a response that is pathological. A school environment which exhibits indifference to a student's culture, one in which the deck is seen as stacked or one in which the rules of the game favor other cultures most of the time is in fact an oppressive environment. The oppressed student

is skilled at detecting not only direct oppression but the very subtle or unconscious acts of oppression as well. At the same time, there are a few potent options available to that student. He or she does not really control the environment, make the rules, or set the standards. In this setting there are many varieties of responding behavior which may be employed with some psychological relief if not significant effect on the environment. A student may strike out aggressively, sometimes indiscriminantly at real or imagined tormentors. Assertive behavior may be verbal, physical or manipulative such as the contest of wills, often occurring between teachers and students in classrooms. While the aggressive behavior is not socially desirable, neither is it necessarily evidence of pathology. It simply is for some students the only way they see open to them to cope. Thomas Hilliard (1970) in a study of Black student activists found them to be more healthy psychologically than students who made no particular response to their oppressed condition. There is a suggestion here that the student who is ill may well be the one in a second category. He is the one who perceives no problem when there really is a problem or the one who, seeing the problem, simply yields. Often teachers tend to treat the student who strikes back as bizarre and the one who yields as healthy. It is certainly easier to deal with the quiet one. If, however, a teacher understands what aggressive behavior may symptomize, it may be possible to be helpful to a student to find ways of developing more effective strategies for survival and enhancement. Further, teachers who understand will not tacitly sanction withdrawal behavior by accepting it as normative and desirable.

6. Teachers Must Understand That All Minds Are Equally Complex.

Teachers must see how every complex mind demonstrates its potential with the material and problems which it must confront in its own cultural setting. The universality of mental operations and skill and the specificity or relativity of cultural content is carefully documented in Claude Levi-Strauss' The Savage Mind (1966). Both professional literature and experience with students from different cultures is necessary to develop a real respect for and understanding of the real potential of all students

7. Teachers Must Be Helped To Understand That The Poor And Racial Or Ethnic Minorities Can And Actually Have Been Able To Learn At The Same Level As Others When The Proper Environmental Support Was Provided.

A University of California, Berkeley professor of mathematics was able to demonstrate that Black elementary school children were able to master abstract mathematical processes at a level precisely equal to their white middle class counterparts, with no apologies for cultural difference. If teachers know that these things happen frequently, their level of expectation and strategies will certainly be reflective of that understanding.

8. Teachers Must Understand That Learning Is Related To A Sense Of Power Over Some Of The Forces Which Impinge Upon Our Lives.

Motivation is low when students feel powerless and visa versa. Stephen Charnofsky (1971) has presented a full treatment of the role of power and powerlessness in learning across all groups. Paulo Friere (1972) has treated the same subject from a slightly different perspective. Both men, however, demonstrate the connection clearly.

9. Teachers Must Understand How Their Own Expectations Are Determining Factors In Building A Climate For Growth Of Students.

Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson have studied this phenomenon and described it in Pygmalion in the Classroom. Even when criticisms of their experimental design or statistical procedures have been taken into account the principle remains and reaffirms what many writers, teachers, and other students of human behavior have found in their daily lives and work. A part of what we all are is determined by the kind of feedback which we get from others. Victimized students require positive and accurate feedback if they are to grow.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR MULTICULTURAL TEACHER EDUCATION.

Programs of teacher education must insure that, among other things, the following skills are developed by teachers for teaching students from cultures different from their own.

1. The Ability To Communicate With Students From Cultures Other Than Ones Own.

This skill must be demonstrated by teachers in training and validated by feedback from the students who are being served, and by lay and professionals from other cultures. Communication has occurred only when all parties to the effort have been engaged. This feedback must be provided for as a part of the training program.

2. Diagnosing The Knowledge And Abilities Of Students From Cultures Different From Ones Own.

Teacher education programs must provide for the opportunity of teachers to demonstrate that they are able to glean relevant data regarding student ability, interests, values, concerns, and the students' perception of the school.

3. Skill In The Evaluation Of Professional Literature Bearing Upon Multicultural Education Problems.

Teachers as consumers and interpreters of professional literature must be able to deal critically with that material in order to find and utilize relevant information and to detect distortion, inaccuracy and incomplete information. This is especially important in view of some of the exploitive research and program development which has been done and which is sometimes cited in professional literature. Teachers should be helped to detect racism and exploitation in research and not to be awed by pseudo "scholarship" which is sometimes used to cover inadequate research.

4. Self Diagnosis.

Teachers must be helped to demonstrate skill in self diagnosis regarding their own behavior in a multicultural context.

5. Recognizing Cultural Equivalencies.

Teachers education programs must help teachers to go beyond the superficialities of form or style in communication or thinking and detect substantive activities in which pupils are involved. For example, does a teacher recognize reasoning skills when they are exhibited through the vehicle of a non-standard English or slang? Also, does the teacher miss shallow reasoning when it occurs if the student speaks beautiful standard English? Differences may be seen easily. Equivalencies are often missed.

ESSENTIAL ATTITUDES

Teacher attitudes toward students from other cultures can become more positive as they gain depth experiences with individuals from other cultures. For some teachers it will be necessary to provide a supportive environment while they

experiment for the first time. For others, little help may be needed. For still others, it may be that their fears, prejudice, and other inadequacies are too much to overcome. For these few, it is necessary that they be helped to find work where so much does not depend upon cross-cultural understanding and commitment.

Among others, the following teacher attitudes should emerge as teachers work cross culturally.

1. Teachers Must Be As Free Of Bias As Possible And Must Be Open To Continuing Self Examination.

2. Teachers Must Honor And Value Cultural Alternatives Such As Language, Belief, Values, and Behaviors.

   Teachers must see these alternatives as valuable in their own right and not simply starting points for "growth" into standard patterns. For example, excellence in all music is good. Teaching jazz in school should not be regarded simply as a way of seducing students to learn "better music" later. Jazz is an equivalent art form, not a subordinate one. Similarly, all art forms in all cultures should be regarded as equivalencies rather than primitive stages of standard American-European forms.

3. Teachers Must Feel That A Multicultural Orientation Is Beneficial To Them Personally.

   "Benevolent multiculturalism" says that oppressed groups are being given help and have little to offer a helper. Nothing could be further from the truth. As Friere (1972) suggests, it is vital to both helper and the person being helped that a "dialog" be established.

THE ESSENTIAL CLINICAL CONTEXT FOR MULTICULTURAL TEACHER EDUCATION .

1. Feedback On Candidate Behavior.

   If teachers are to work successfully with students from cultures different from their own, it is imperative that the training program provide for more than intellectualization about cross-cultural issues. Teacher growth in this area is possible only to the extent that the teacher's own behavior in cross-cultural settings is the subject of examination and experimentation.

2. The Clinical Setting Must Contain A Multicultural Pupil Population

   representing all socio-economic levels between and within as many diverse cultural groups as possible. It should be clear from this that some sites are unsuitable for clinical placements. Teachers whose only clinical experience is in a homogeneous cultural and a homogeneous socio-economic environment will be severely limited.

3. The Clinical Context Must Involve A Multicultural Candidate Class.

   It is vital that candidate groups have broad cultural perspectives represented within the class. Group discussions involving only those who are from similar backgrounds tend to be seriously circumscribed. Cross-cultural peer-feedback is needed in addition to information from supervisors, students, and the teacher candidate himself or herself in order to get the most from the clinical setting.

4. The Clinical Context Must Contain A Multicultural Professional Staff In Public Schools And Training Institutions.

   A true multicultural perspective begins with multiculturalism among those who are responsible for planning, executing and evaluating programs. The multicultural perspective is required in all phases

of program development. Judgements regarding site selection, master teacher selection, student teacher performance with pupils, professional library resources, etc. require a variety of cultural viewpoints.

5. The Clinical Context Must Contain Staff Who Have Demonstrated Their Own Ability In Fostering Growth In Pupils From Cultures Different From Their Own.

Theory and practice are partners. The credibility of the professor or supervisor is directly affected by his or her ability to perform. This is especially true of multicultural teacher education programs. Hope for a new teacher comes from those who have had real and successful cross-cultural experiences in facilitation of learning.

6. The Clinical Context Must Provide Access to Diverse Communities.

A teacher candidate becomes more able in cross-cultural setting if his or her clinical experience extends beyond the school and into diverse communities which are served.

7. The Clinical Context Must Provide Each Candidate With Multicultural Contact Overtime.

Attitudes and values do not develop instantaneously. It is necessary that teacher education programs provide for early guided cross-cultural contacts beginning in the first years of college and extending throughout the program. It may be that basic subject matter requirements may be specifically designed for teachers so that new content need not be added. Courses in the behavioral sciences and history can be adapted to serve as vehicles for early cross-cultural experiences.

CONCLUSION

Certified teachers will in all likelihood be required to teach students whose cultures are different from their own. Their chances of success can be greatly improved by specific training focusing upon multicultural skills, attitudes, and understandings. Some teachers can teach students from other cultures very successfully. Teachers from racial or ethnic minorities require cross-cultural training just as all other teachers. The training must include an examination of the candidates behavior in a real context confronting individual and institutional racism directly as required. Teacher education staff materials and sites must be multicultural.

There is real hope for success in improving the ability of teachers to work with children from cultures different from the teacher's own. however, this does not happen automatically. Training programs must give highest priority to this problem. We can draw upon the successful cross-cultural teaching experiences of some teachers of all races and socio-economic backgrounds for guidance. Pretending that a problem does not exist is the surest way to exacerbate our number one problem in the schools. By engaging problems directly, openly, honestly, and without fear, teacher educators have a fighting chance of building an environment conducive to growth for all children and one which will enrich the personal and professional lives of the teachers.

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